

IN THE CLAIMS

Please amend the claims as follows:

Claim 1 (Currently Amended): A process for removing halide compounds adhering to finely divided metal oxide particles having a BET surface area of from 5 to 600 m<sup>2</sup>/g by steam, the metal oxide particles being formed by reaction of halide-containing starting materials by hydrolysis or oxidizing gases, wherein

    said finely divided metal oxide particles containing residues of halide compounds are applied, together with reaction gases, to the upper part of an upright column and migrate downwards through the column due to gravity,

    steam having a temperature of from 100°C to 500°C, optionally mixed with air, is applied at the bottom end of the column,

    the finely divided metal oxide particles containing residues of halide compounds and the steam are fed counter-currently,

    the metal oxide particles freed of halide residues are removed at the base of the column, and

    steam and halide residues are removed at the head of the column,

    which process is characterized in that

    the column is heated in such a manner that the temperature difference T<sub>bottom</sub> – T<sub>top</sub> between the lower part and the upper part of the column is from 20°C to 150°C 50°C to 100°C, the maximum temperature in the column is in the lower part of the column, the maximum temperature in the column is from 150°C to 500°C 350°C to 450°C, and the metal oxide particles have a residence time in the column of from 1 second to 30 minutes.

Claims 2-3 (Canceled).

Claim 4 (Previously Presented): The process according to claim 1, characterized in that the residence time is from 5 seconds to 5 minutes.

Claim 5 (Previously Presented): The process according to claim 1, characterized in that the metal oxide particles entering the column have a temperature of from about 100°C to 250°C.

Claim 6 (Previously Presented): The process according to claim 1, characterized in that the amount of steam that is introduced is from 0.0025 to 0.25 kg of steam per hour per kg of metal oxide particles.

Claim 7 (Canceled).

Claim 8 (Previously Presented): The process according to claim 1, characterized in that, after the metal oxide particles have been removed at the base of the column, they are passed through at least one further column in which the maximum temperature does not exceed 500°C.

Claim 9 (Previously Presented): The process according to claim 8, characterized in that the metal oxide particles and the steam are fed co-currently or counter-currently in the further columns.

Claim 10 (Previously Presented): The process according to claim 8, characterized in that the second and subsequent columns have a temperature difference  $T_{bottom} - T_{top}$  between the lower part and the upper part of the columns of at least 5°C.

Claims 11-13 (Canceled)..

Claim 14 (Currently Amended): The process according to claim 2 1, wherein the steam entering the column has a temperature of from 120°C to 200°C.

Claim 15 (Canceled).

Claim 16 (Previously Presented): The process according to claim 4, wherein the steam entering the column has a temperature of from 120°C to 200°C.

Claims 17-18 (Canceled).

Claim 19 (Previously Presented): The process according to claim 4, wherein the amount of steam that is introduced is from 0.0025 to 0.25 kg of steam per hour per kg of metal oxide particles.

Claim 20 (Previously Presented): The process according to claim 5, wherein the amount of steam that is introduced is from 0.0025 to 0.25 kg of steam per hour per kg of metal oxide particles.

Claim 21 (Canceled).